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By *ADAM FITZ-ADAM.*

To be continued every THURSDAY.

THURSDAY, *December* the 25h, 1755.

An ideo tantum venis, ut exires? MARTIAL.

To Mr. FITZ-ADAM.

SIR,

AS I find you are a perſon who make the reformation of mankind your care, and ſtand forth like another Hercules to correct the irregularities and indiſcretions which folly, vice, or that unmeaning fickle thing, called faſhion, give birth to; I take the liberty of troubling you with my thoughts upon a ſpecies of animals, which at preſent are very numerous, and to be found in all places of public amuſement. But though I am going to give you my remarks upon this race of beings, I muſt confeſs that I have never yet heard of any appellation by which they are diſtinguiſhed. The futility indeed of the age, has occaſioned many ridiculous and contemptible perſons to riſe up among us, who without aiming at any laudable purpoſe, or acting under the dictates

dictates of any principle, have formed themſelves into clubs and ſocieties, and aſſumed names and titles, as innocent of ſenſe and meaning, as are the perſons themſelves who bear them. Such are the *Bucks*, *Stags*, *Bloods*, and many more with which the news-papers have from time to time made me acquainted. But the animals which I would now place under your notice, are of a very different kind; they are, in ſhort, a ſpecies of young men, who, from a certain blind impulſe, are always rambling up and down this town, and never fail to be preſent at all places of diverſion, without having a taſte or capacity to enjoy any.

Upon my going lately to a capital play, I ſaw ſeveral of them ſitting indeed with great order and decorum, but ſo inattentive, ſo indifferent, and unmoved through the whole performance, while the reſt of the audience were all eye and ear, that they appeared to me to be ſo many ſtatues. Their behaviour ſurpriſed me extremely, and led me at the ſame time to aſk myſelf, for what purpoſe theſe young ſparks come to a play, and if, like Cato of old, it was *only to go away again?* For if they never attend to what paſſes before them, if they are not ſuſceptible of thoſe emotions, which a well-wrought ſcene raiſes in every feeling breaſt, if they do not follow the actor through all the ſweet deluſion of his art, in ſhort, if they do not as other people do, *laugh with thoſe that laugh, and weep with thoſe that weep*, what buſineſs have they there?

To judge indeed by their appearance, one would imagine nothing could make them quit their tea-table and looking-glaſs. And yet, ſir, no public place is free from them; though as far as I can judge, the opera-houſe is their favourite haunt. To reconcile this ſeeming contradiction, I muſt inform you that I have ſtudied and examined them with great attention, and find their whole

whole compoſition to conſiſt of two ingredients only; theſe are, *ſelf-admiration* and *inſenſibility*; and to theſe two cauſes, operating jointly and ſeparately, all their actions muſt be referred. Hence it is, that they are always to be found in public places, where they go, not to *ſee*, but to be *ſeen*, not to *hear*, but to be *heard*. Hence it is, that they are ſo devoted to the opera; and here indeed they ſeem to be peculiarly directed by that power, called *inſtinct*, which always prompts every creature to purſue what is beſt and fitteſt for it. Now the opera is to them, if I may uſe the expreſſion, a very nurſing mother, which feeds them with the pap of it's own ſoft nonſenſe, and lulls and rocks them to their deſired repoſe. This is indeed their proper element, and as if inſpired by the genius of the place, I have ſometimes ſeen them brighten up and appear with an air of joy and ſatisfaction.

The mind as well as the ſtomach muſt have food fitted and prepared to it's taſte and humour, or it will reject and loath it: now the opera is ſo good a cook, and knows ſo well to pleaſe the palates of theſe her gueſts, that it is wonderful to ſee with what an appetite they devour whatever ſhe ſets before them: nay, ſo great is their partiality, that the ſame food dreſt by another hand, ſhall have no reliſh; but minced and frittered by this their favourite, ſhall be delicious. The plain beef and muſtard of Shakeſpear (though ſerved up by very good cooks) turn their ſtomachs, while the maccaroni of Rolli, is, in their opinion, a diſh fit for the Gods. Thus Julius Cæſar, killed by the conſpirators, never touches them; but *Julio Cheſare*, killing himſelf, and ſinging and ſtabbing, and ſtabbing and ſinging, till ſwan-like, he expires, is *caro caro*, and *divino*. Scipio, the great conqueror of Afric, is with them a mighty ſilly fellow; but *Shippione* is a charming creature. It is evident then,

then, that the food muſt be ſuited to the taſte, as the taſte to the food; and as the waters of a certain fountain of Theſſaly, from their benumbing quality, could be contained in nothing but the hoof of an aſs, ſo can this languid and disjointed compoſition find no admittance but in ſuch heads as are expreſſly formed to receive it. Thus their inſenſibility appears as well in what they like, as in what they reject; and like a faithful companion, attends them at all times, and in all places: for I have remarked that, wherever they are, they bring a *mind not to be changed by time or place.* However, as a play is the very touchſtone of the paſſions, the neutrality which they ſo ſtrictly obſerve, is no where ſo conſpicuous as at the theatres. There they are to be ſeen, one while when tears are flowing all around them, another when the very benches are cracking with peals of laughter, ſitting as calm and ſerene, as if they had nothing but their own innocent thoughts to converſe with.

Upon conſidering their character and temper, as far as they can be gueſſed at by their actions, and obſerving the apathy in which they ſeem to be wrapt, I once was inclined to think, that they might be a ſect of philoſophers, who had adopted the maxims of the ſtoics of old: but when I recollected that a thirſt after knowledge, contempt of pain, and whatever is called evil, together with an inflexible rectitude in all their actions, were the characteriſtics of thoſe ſages, I ſoon perceived my miſtake: for I cannot ſay, that I ever found that theſe philoſophers practiſe any of thoſe virtues. To ſpeak the truth, it is very difficult to know in what claſs to place them, and under what denomination they ought to paſs. Were I to decide, I ſhould at once pronounce them to belong to the vegetable world, and place them among the beings of ſtill life; for they ſeem to be too much under the ſtandard of their ſpecies to be allowed to rank with the

reſt

reſt of mankind. To be ſerious, is it not ſtrange that their heads and hearts ſhould be impenetrable to all the paſſions that affect the reſt of the world; nay, even more ſo than age itſelf, whoſe feelings Time with his icy hand has chilled, and almoſt extinguiſhed? And yet age, with all it's infirmities, is more quick, more alive, and ſuſceptible of the finer paſſions, than theſe ſons of indifference in their prime and vigour of youth.

An old woman, whom I found at my ſide in the pit the other night, gave me an inſtance of the truth of this aſſertion. She did juſtice both to the poet and the actors, and beſtowed her applauſe plentifully, though never but where it was due. At the ſame time I ſaw ſeveral of theſe inanimate bodies ſitting as unconcerned, as if they had not known the language, or could not hear what was ſaid upon the ſtage.

It is a proverbial expreſſion (though perhaps a little injurious) to call an inſipid and ſenſeleſs perſon of the male ſex an *old woman*. For my part I was ſo charmed with mine, that I will make no diſreſpectful compariſons: but yet, ſir, how contemptible muſt theſe triflers be, who can be out-done by a toothleſs old woman, in quickneſs, ſpirit, and the exertion of their faculties? From a regard then to that agreeable and ſenſible matron, I will not liken theſe *inſenſibles* to thoſe grave perſonages; but yet I cannot forbear thinking that they approach very near to what is moſt like old women, *old men*; and that they reſemble the picture of thoſe crazy beings in the laſt ſtage of life, as drawn by that inimitable painter of human nature, Shakeſpear: for theſe young men, like his old men, are *ſans eyes, ſans ears, ſans taſte, ſans every thing*.

I am, Sir,

Your faithful humble ſervant,

Philonous.

P. S.

P. S. The verſes underneath upon the ſame ſubject as the letter, I venture to tack to it (like a bit of embroidery to a plain cloth) and if you think either or both deſerving any notice, you may preſent them with my ſervice to the gentle reader.

The INSENSIBLE.

While crouded theatres attentive ſit,
And loud applauſes echo through the pit,
Unconſcious of the cunning of the ſcene,
Sits ſmiling Florio with inſipid mein.
Fix'd like a ſtanding lake, in dull repoſe,
No grief, no joy, his GENTLE *boſom knows.*
NATURE *and* GARRICK *no attention gain,*
And hapleſs WIT *darts all her ſtings in vain.*
Thus on the Alps eternal froſts appear,
Which mock the changes of the various year;
Intenſeſt ſuns unheeded roll away,
" *And on th' impaſſive ice the lightnings play.*"

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